THE *COUNTER*FORCE

MAXIMUM ROCKNROLL REVIEWS #497

OCTOBER 2024

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MAXIMUM ROCKNROLL

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This issue contains 111 reviews, contributed by:

João Seixas
D. Gregory
Jeff Cost
Eric Anderson
Neal Ray
Matt Casteel
Jake Joyce
Emma Miller
Biff Bifaro
Johnny Leach
Nick Odorizzi
Fiona Rae
Dov Malzberg
Erika Elizabeth
Jason Harding
Bill Chamberlain
Seth McBurney
Gonza Perez
Luke Henley
Romain Basset
Tim Janchar
Alex Howell
Willis Schenk

THE COUNTERFORCE

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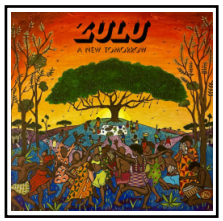
Print It Yourself.

Z-PAK – 15 Minutes With Z-Pak cassette

This rules. Second tape from Philly punks that delivers weirdo hardcore of the highest order. Z-PAK sounds like Doc Dart of the CRUCIFUCKS fronting SACCHARINE TRUST on speed. The shrill, frenzied vocals pierce the fast punk, and we even get some BLACK FLAG-style atonal soloing on "Jaws of Life." On "Whiplash," vocalist Alex's voice cracks through the octaves like MARIAH CAREY going through puberty. Unhinged and exciting, this is a band that is probably best taken in fifteen-minute doses, repeated a few times a day.

Reviewer: Nick Odorizzi
Label: 11 PM

ZULU – A New Tomorrow LP



L.A.-based hardcore band ZULU delivered an explosive and genre-expanding experience with their 2023 release, *A New Tomorrow*. Clocking in at under thirty minutes, the fifteen-track album intersperses metallic hardcore and powerviolence with unexpected yet cohesive elements like soul-jazz instrumentals, spoken word poetry, violin and piano, and clips of classic reggae and soul songs that act as musical interludes and add layers of political and cultural commentary. This isn't just a hardcore album. It is a love letter to the exultation of Black culture, identity, resilience, and joy, balancing both anger and hope in its sound and message. The record is filled with plenty of heavy riffs and spinkick-inducing breakdowns, but it's also deeply thoughtful and it might challenge some listeners to open their minds to some new sounds and ideas. Recommended for fans of the heavy and fast who are open to a blend of genres and a strongly underrepresented point-of-view in extreme music. *A New Tomorrow* stands out as a vital record in today's expanding scene. Check out: "Fakin' Tha Funk (You Get Did)."

Reviewer: Jeff Cost
Label: Flatspot

ALAMBRADA – Rios de Sangre LP

The successor of *Muerte Preventiva*, *Rios de Sangre* serves up a relentless barrage of fiery riffs, driving rhythms, and socially-charged lyrics that resonate deeply with both the pulse of Bogota and the broader struggles of the heart. From the opening track, we are thrust into a whirlwind of fast hardcore à la VOID or KORO, expertly layered with both frenetic urgency and poignant storytelling. Each track reflects a powerful blend of breakneck speed and relentless power, showcasing the band's charisma for crafting anthems. ALAMBRADA aren't timid when it comes to confronting political and social issues head-on, articulating the frustrations and aspirations of a generation longing for change. From the busy punk aficionados from Rat Trap, with killer projects like MURO, UNIDAD IDEOLOGICA, and ATAQUE ZERO, the question remains: how do these guys have time to make such great bands?

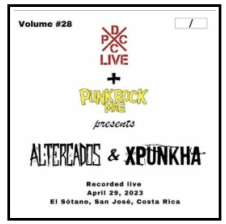
Reviewer: João Seixas
Label: Autsajder Produckcija / Fuerza Ingobernable / Unlawful Assembly

ALIEN NOSEJOB – Turns the Colour of Bad Shit LP

The prolific Jake Robertson returns once again with a new slate of fantastic songs via his ALIEN NOSEJOB project, and continues to surprise by pushing into new sounds. This time around, *Turns the Colour of Bad Shit* offers up ten tracks of classic punk greatness. And what is true in the macro is true in the micro, as the sounds on these tracks even find ways to change and evolve from one to the next. Kicking off with the slow yet propulsive burn of "Bird Strike," the record then flips right into the pummeling garage punk highlight of "Trapped in Time." Anyone who loved this year's fantastic PACK RAT album will be more than happy to toss this record on right after; snotty lyrical delivery coupled with primitive song structures that don't need any other add-ons to grab your attention. It's no wonder that *Turns the Colour of Bad Shit* is being put out by the trifecta of Total Punk in the US, Drunken Sailor in the UK and Anti Fade in Australia.

Reviewer: D. Gregory
Label: Anti-Fade / Drunken Sailor / Total Punk

ALTERCADOS / XPUNKHA – DCxPC & Punk Rock Mag Presents, Vol. 28 split LP



Two Costa Rican bands displaying their prowess in this latest installment of the prolific DCxPC live series. ALTERCADOS take a melodic approach to their uptempo, bass-driven punk rock. Plunky, with half-sung/half-screamed vocals, they bounce through their set with hints of hard rock and metal. The sound quality is great, but the tones are a bit clashing at times. XPUNKHA is more straightforward and aggressive, turning in an energetic performance that feels more cohesive. That said, these soundboard recordings leave something to be desired—namely, the sensation of being in the crowd. That's a tall order for any live capture, but I can't help but get hung up on this snag. It sucks the life out of the songs and leaves me with an impression of what the bands sound like, but no confidence in guessing what a studio recording could yield.

Reviewer: Matt Casteel
Label: DCxPC / Punk Rock Mag

AN SLUA / RECKLESS UPSTARTS / RED BRICKS / THE UNCOUTH – Intercontinental Oi! split LP

Intercontinental Oi! is a comp featuring four different Oi! bands from four different countries putting forth three tracks each. The first and last bands here, RED BRICKS (Germany) and RECKLESS UPSTARTS (Canada), both sound proficient and solid with a skate punk sound that wouldn't sound out of place on a *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* soundtrack. They both sound poppy, bouncy, and anthemic, if not slightly forgettable. The UNCOUTH (USA) have more of a '90s street punk sound, with a sort of sing-song, gruff vocal style that's also just OK. Finally, there's AN SLUA (Ireland), my favorite of the bunch. They remind me a little of early CHUBBY & THE GANG and add some cool phaser effects to their guitars here and there. All that said, none of this is really for me, to be honest. It's all very polished and reminds me of stuff you'd hear played at an early 2000s Warped Tour stop. I'm no hater, but with bands like MESS, BÉTON ARMÉ, and the CHISEL giving the modern sound of Oi! a facelift with a rougher edge, it leaves this corner of the genre sounding a little limp.

Reviewer: Eric Anderson
Label: Insurgence

ANN BERETTA – DCxPC Live Presents, Vol. 21: The Last Songs Live LP

This recording of ANN BERETTA's final show at Richmond Music Hall in 2023 marks the end of a nearly 30-year run for the band. Spanning thirteen tracks, it's a tour through their catalog of mid-tempo rock'n'roll that draws inspiration from bands like RANCID, GREEN DAY, and ONE MAN ARMY. Instead of any middle-finger-waving theatrics, these guys give the impression of being very earnest players in a long-running band that never really made it big. While the performance lacks the raw energy of the group in their prime, the sound quality is pretty good and the band's heart is on full display. One high point is when STRIKE ANYWHERE singer Thomas Barnett joins the band for "The Real America." This album may not be the best introduction to their music, but it's probably a great memento for long-time fans.

Reviewer: Jeff Cost
Label: DCxPC

ARMOR – Afraid of What's to Come 12″

One of this year's best releases—ARMOR from Tallahassee plays modern D-beat with rumbling hardcore vocals on *Afraid of What's to Come*; think WARTHOG fronted by the vocalist from T.S. WARSPITE. High praise, I know, but believe me, this EP rips. In addition to their gnarly fusing of styles, the song structures here are stellar. The band utilizes tempo changes to great effect like on opening stomper "En Mass" and my favorite track "Fodder," which sees the band getting extra raw, almost reminding me of something off of STINGRAY's *Fortress Britain*. This one's a no-brainer, pick up a copy and play it loud.

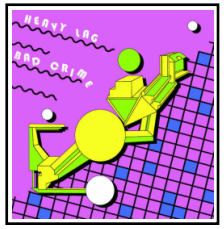
Reviewer: Eric Anderson
Label: 11 PM

BABY TYLER BAND – Baby Tyler Band LP

Short and sweet. I found this a good deal of fun. Very energetic production, the bass has a nice hum to it and the drums have a nice atmosphere to their sound. I was *not* expecting the song "Overnight Sensation" to pop up at the end. It's worth checking this LP out just for that song alone. Joyously bizarre vocals and guitar work. BABY TYLER is a hilarious name, too. I'm interested to see more from this band.

Reviewer: Neal Ray
Label: Night Bell

BAD CRIME / HEAVY LAG – split LP



The HEAVY LAG half of this split LP was recorded by Jeff Burke of MARKED MEN and RADIOACTIVITY, which was a perfect choice by the band for their razor-sharp guitars and relentless rhythm section. I can hear some of Burke's influence on the songs, and that is a total compliment. It's what you want when you go with a well-traveled, experienced engineer in the studio—you could hear it on the band's last album (*Another Year Closer to Whatever*) recorded by the BOUNCING SOULS' Pete Steinkopf. The BAD CRIME half was recorded in their hometown of Milwaukee. They share the spirit and same endearing, lo-fi "wheels falling off" appeal of fellow Brew City punks MODERN MACHINES.

Reviewer: Tim Janchar
Label: Bloated Kat

BAD IMAGE – II cassette

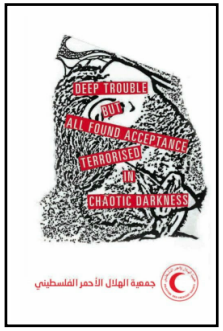
Five smoldering cuts of pissed-off hardcore punk done just the way I like it, relentless and raw. Word on the street is that their singer, Jaedyn, is known to wield an eight-foot chain during live performances. Sick! With a couple tapes under their (bullet) belt, BAD IMAGE has cultivated a noisy, raw-punk-inspired style that radiates energy and rage. Having relocated from sunscorched Phoenix to dreary Seattle, one has to wonder if the change of location has led to a shift in disposition. No complaints here. From furious D-beat to fist-pumping pogo punk, they are checking all the right boxes. Can't wait to see where they'll go from here.

Reviewer: Matt Casteel
Label: Noise Merchant

BANDY – Void EP

Really fantastic post-punk here. At times, it's reminiscent of TALKING HEADS after a caffeine binge. Also reminds me a bit of the DEAD MILKMEN if they had gone to art school in Chicago. There's a little bit of a shoegaze element as well, with lots of pedal usage that drowns everything else out in a fuzz. Nothing I'd consider groundbreaking, but this is a really solid EP and well worth a listen if you're a fan of dance punk.

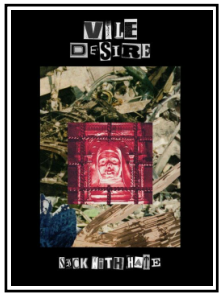
V/A – No Sleep Til Palestine is Free cassette



What a weird collection of music, I loved it. Nothing is more punk than a collection of bands in the name of an issue they deeply care about, and *No Sleep Til Palestine is Free* is a perfect example of that. The variety of genres was refreshing, as it had experimental electronic, punk, no wave, garage rock, folk, and more. This album really has it all and keeps you on your toes, not knowing what to expect next. While in some of the tracks, you can hear that the recording quality is not the highest, but I feel that it contributes to the angry punk vibe that's felt throughout the album. The tracks that really hit home for me were "No Sleep (Live)," as I feel they really embodied the vibe of the whole album and was great to hear it as a live version. Overall, I loved how strange and fun this collection of music was!

Reviewer: Emma Miller
Label: Girlsville

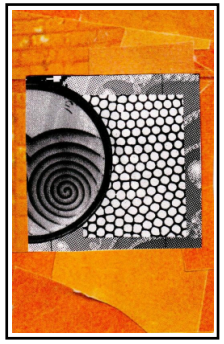
VILE DESIRE – Sick With Hate cassette



Five tracks of knuckle-dragging, head-bobbing hardcore and noise rock from St. Louis. Big repetitive riffs here, reminiscent of MELVINS, KILLDOZER, or even pre-explosion NIRVANA, with ultra-harsh vocals and a layer of dissonant guitar on top. It sounds like the best, nastiest grunge with the nihilism of HOAX and is recommended for playing as loud as possible.

Reviewer: Nick Odorizzi
Label: self-released

VISUAL LEARNER – 2024 Demo cassette



Loud and fast demo with scrunched-up rhythms from a new Minneapolis foursome. A little bit slacker rock "don't give a fuck" jaw-hanging, a little bit indie rock whiny contempt. Instrumentals are tight, with guitar leads sprouting out of every verse's end, ride-tapping drums, and upper-end crunch from rhythm and bass guitars. For fans of Phillip Hill bands.

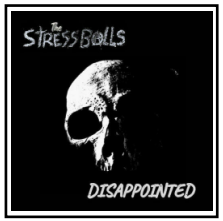
Reviewer: Willis Schenk
Label: self-released

WOODSTOCK '99 – '99 Ta Life 12"

For those growing weary of what can easily be perceived as a stagnant era of hardcore punk music, I enthusiastically point you in the direction of WOODSTOCK '99, who are simultaneously elevating and delighting in taking the piss out of the genre. This refreshing record starts off with a couple tracks of juicy hardcore sound that's fairly standard in approach, and from there it becomes increasingly unhinged until we find ourselves lost in the epic schizophrenia of "99 Problems," and ultimately left at the mercy of the glitching, soundbite-ridden, genre-hopping madness of "Za Rat King." You'll start off unassumingly bobbing your head and end up not quite sure what just hit ya. The band's penchant for hilarious titles remains intact (see the album name, as well as leading contender for song name of the year "Hotter than a Half-Fucked Fox in a Forest Fire"), while their musical restlessness becomes more palpable than ever, and the album's concise run time leaves me thirsting for the next round. Well played.

Reviewer: Jason Harding
Label: Sorry State

THE STRESS BALLS – Disappointed cassette



Power-chord-driven gutter punk out of Boston. Laden with noodly guitar leads and strong, charismatic vocals, this album's lo-fi quality really aids in its efforts. Sounds raw and organic—just a bunch of folks having fun playing punk. Reminds me of something you'd have heard from Hellcat Records in their early years. Nothing too groundbreaking, with the aforementioned vocals doing most of the heavy lifting, but this is a really fun outing, especially if you're a fan of DIY punk.

Reviewer: Jake Joyce
Label: Stuffy's

THE SWANKYS – The Very Best of Hero LP reissue

The SWANKYS played punk with a wild, untamed style most of the time. They range from their beginnings having some '77-style punk influence, and then starting to play more hardcore-style while still writing songs with some melody, or just playing ripping hardcore that reminds me slightly of the BRISTLES from Sweden. This says it was mastered at Abbey Road Studios, if I'm reading it correctly. General Speech is doing a great job bringing this kind of thing to us.I have a feeling that this could be sold out by the time anyone reads this.

Reviewer: Bill Chamberlain
Label: General Speech / King's World

THE TINOPENERS – I Want You / I Don't Wanna Be 7″

This one's a bit of an oddity, as one side of the 7" seems to be an incomplete track from the band's only four recordings ever put to tape. Regardless, it's cool to see this type of archival work in the flow of punk history. Belfast's the TINOPENERS were short-lived, but "I Don't Wanna Be" shows they had a solid knack for power pop. It's hard to really say where they could have gone since they called it quits so young, but this release is worth checking out for punk historians and bop-appreciators alike.

Reviewer: Luke Henley
Label: Fish & Cheap

TUXEDO CATS – Fake Punk EP

TUXEDO CATS, a power punk outfit out of Brooklyn, return with their second four-song EP. With an increased velocity compared to their solid debut *Out of the Bag*, the tunes here on *Fake Punk* burn bright and burn fast. At first listen, one might think the influences here can be plucked out easily, but on multiple listens, the breadth of their taste really starts to unfold. Fans of Good Vibrations records, '70s Belgian punk, the NEW YORK DOLLS, or simply spending an inordinate amount of time in record shops will all find plenty of satisfaction here. While all these sounds may read as all over the map, literally, TUXEDO CATS seem effortless in their ability to blend a litany of influences. And I'd be remiss not to mention "Jaguar K-11," a scorching, one-and-a-half-minute ode to the folding knife, as one of the very best B-sides I've heard this entire year.

Reviewer: D. Gregory
Label: New York Punk

UPRIGHT FORMS – Blurred Wires CD

UPRIGHT FORMS' album *Blurred Wires* showcases a more accessible side of Nick Sakes, the singer/guitarist formerly of DAZZLING KILLMEN, COLOSSAMITE, and XADDAX. The Minneapolis-based trio offers a blend of bass-heavy, dynamic noise rock tracks that are tempered with softer, more indie rock moments, as heard on songs like "Drive at Night," "Long Shadow," and "Animositine." The album walks a line between angular rock aggression and a mellower approach, reminiscent of some of those old Amphetamine Reptile bands in one moment and indie rock bands like the PIXIES in the next. It's perfect for fans of discordant, energetic rock who have mellowed slightly with time and don't always need the intensity cranked up. It's good stuff.

Reviewer: Jeff Cost
Label: Skin Graft

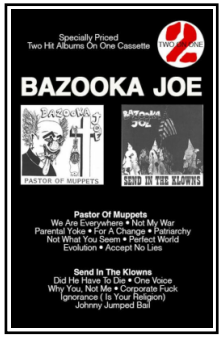
Reviewer: Jake Joyce
Label: Bandyco

BATHOUSE – Helping Bats Helping People 12″

Noisy garage punk band with whiny screaming. I'm a bit prejudiced because of my love of bats, but I thoroughly enjoyed this album. With each song, you get jolted with a different style of fast and upbeat noise. I can't decide what my favorite track is. I loved the funky intro into the heavy-ass chaos in "Ideal Specimen," as well as the build-up in "Bathouse" where you're just hit with a wall of sound that catapults you through a void.

Reviewer: Emma Miller
Label: Happiest Place

BAZOOKA JOE – Pastor of Muppets / Send in the Klowns cassette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Evolution • Accept No Lies
Send In The Klowns
Did He Have To Die • One Voice
Why You, Not Me • Corporate Fuck
Ignorance (Is Your Religion)
Johnny Jumped Bail

Cassette reissue of both 7" releases by a late '80s hardcore outfit from Myrtle Beach, SC. BAZOOKA JOE played revved-up hardcore punk that would fit in both politically and stylistically with the likes of MDC. Formed in 1987, BAZOOKA JOE originally released *Pastor of Muppets* in 1988 and *Send in the Klowns* in 1989. The avid *Maximum Rocknroll* fan will recognize BAZOOKA JOE from the 1989 compilation LP *They Don't Get Paid, They Don't Get Laid, But Boy Do They Work Hard!* (*MRR* No. 4). The band had a total of five songs on three different compilations from 1989 and 1990, and the tracks are all true rippers. What a missed opportunity! With the inclusion of a few extra songs, this could have been a complete discography cassette. Either way, BAZOOKA JOE played no-nonsense hardcore punk, and this is a cool collection of some of the band's output.

Reviewer: Biff Bifaro
Label: Broken Sound

BOONDALL BOYS – Hard Rubbish LP reissue

Suburban Brisbanian basement punkers BOONDALL BOYS released this record back in the good ol' days of 2007. Once found (it was lost, apparently??), the band threw it on twelve inches and pushed it into the internet to share it with the masses. There are some things to enjoy: charging guitar riffs, and a brawled-out bro version of "My War" is kinda cool. At the conclusion of the record, however, it seems almost like looking through someone else's yearbook.

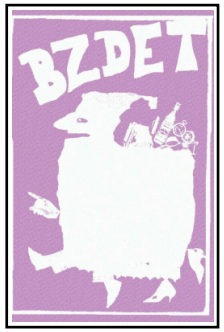
Reviewer: Johnny Leach
Label: Bargain Bin / Swashbuckling Hobo

BOOTCAMP – Controlled Burn cassette

Fast and angry hardcore punk from Iowa City with a D-beat backbone and catchy hooks. With their sights set on the genocidal war machine in the Middle East, Henry Kissinger, scummy rich kids, and the factory-farming ravaging the Midwest, BOOTCAMP provides plenty to hate (on) here. Each track is a banger, but I recommend the closing title track, "Controlled Burn." At a whopping one-minute-and-forty-seconds, it's their longest track and a total scorcher, one you can imagine the knock-off Looney Tunes on the cover dancing to while the industrial farming facility behind them burns to the ground. Great stuff and highly recommended.

Reviewer: Eric Anderson
Label: Pokeys

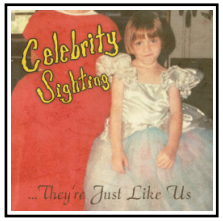
BZDET – Daleko Od Ok cassette



BZDET from Poland has been releasing churning, well-produced post-punk and coldwave for some time, and this tape is no exception. Trebly, bouncing bass lines and syncopated drums hold down the low end while repetitive guitar and synth lines tangle together like knotted up shoelaces under the echoed vocals. It's all very cool, temperature-wise, and sounds like an artifact from early '80s Eastern Europe in the best way. Songs like "Do Yarga" and "Boli" find a minimal groove instantly and ride it out until a fade out a few minutes later. It's effective mood music, as long as your mood is a little gloomy.

Reviewer: Nick Odorizzi
Label: XTRO

CELEBRITY SIGHTING – ...They're Just Like Us cassette



This album opens up to the listener like a field of flowers, blooming to show their colorful fuzz pedals reverberating in a musical garden. *...They're Just Like Us* has the distinct indie ingredients of "screaming down the hallway" vocals, a tempo carried by cymbals, heavy bass, and raw, undercooked guitar to add the cherry on top. The tracks are distinctly political but fun, with "Are You Insured" asking the listener a crucial question should they jump into the pit of a late-night show. The song titles unsurprisingly cover serious topics like "Climate Change;" I've noticed this is the newest wave of political cacophony for recent pop punk releases. The album cover is very cute and in my opinion, resembles something HOLE would have released if they were still together. "Market Value" takes on a faster pace to pick up where the more contemplative beats leave off and "Hypocrite" closes the album leaving a reminiscent feeling of the early days of the FRIGHTS. Being CELEBRITY SIGHTING's first release, they should be glad to know they've created a great coming-of-age soundtrack and an even better garage pop staple.

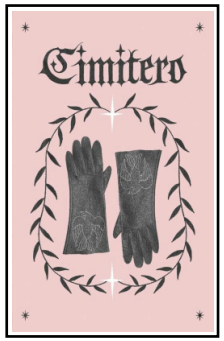
Reviewer: Fiona Rae
Label: Night Bell

CIGARETTE CAMP – Chalk EP

The sound (and possibly the smell) of a midsummer show in a punk house living room; pop sensibilities played through a second-rate amp. The lyrics have the reflective melancholy of JAWBREAKER, but with music closer to AD/DC or JACK PALANCE BAND. CIGARETTE CAMP produces the hooks and minimalist harmonies needed to make this genre work. Fans of this end of punk should take note.

Reviewer: Dov Malzberg
Label: Big Dream / Bloated Kat / Dead Broke

CIMITERO – Il Culto della Carogna cassette



Intrepid Italian duo CIMITERO returns for another dose of black-metal-infused hardcore punk, or as they so aptly call it, "candlelight punk." Their self-titled debut already presented the band as a consistent contender in the world of "spooky chorused guitars" punk bands such as fellow compatriots LUCTA, and *Il Culto Della Carogna* solidifies their sound and plays on the tropes of both genres that influence CIMITERO: there are D-beats, blastbeats, skank beats, devil's chords, and a lot of angry shouting. The four songs on this EP are as cold as they are aggressive, never ceasing to be intense, like a bastard child of DARKTHRONE and DISCHARGE. Italian hardcore bands like WRETCHED or STIGMATHE had a lot of "darker" riffing, so I'm guessing it's natural for an Italian band to gravitate towards the colder, darker aspects of hardcore.

Reviewer: João Seixas
Label: Noise Merchant / The Seats of Piss

CIRCUS – One Big Joke 12″

I don't know what it is about clowns, but I love them. I've got a small collection of clown paraphernalia peppered throughout my home, and have a low-key obsession with the lucha libre trio Los Payasos. So imagine my excitement when the new CIRCUS album came across my desk. I initially thought the band name and clown motif were surface-level gimmicks, but no. The theme permeates throughout the entire record. CIRCUS plays your typical hardcore akin to bands like FROSTBITE and NEW LOWS, and while the music is tight and quite good, it's the lyrics that bring it to a whole other level for me. Featuring such classic lines as "Bozo motherfucker / Got a bone to pick / Forty clowns deep / As the tiny engine rips," as heard in "Clown Car Pile Up," and "You honk the honk but you will never walk my walk," from the track "Silly Prison," CIRCUS continues to maintain the classic balance of insidiousness and innocence that we've all come to known from the storied history of our favorite, face-painted buffoons. Fantastic stuff here, even for those who suffer from coulrophobia.

Reviewer: Jake Joyce
Label: Delayed Gratification

lishing something between a *Funhouse* groove and a *Dopesmoker* drone. The Bandcamp copy tells you the lyrics are some sort of statement on arms trafficking and imperialism or whatever—and that may be true—but they're being delivered more like a threat issued by the seediest member of a biker gang from a '60s exploitation flick through a Valium haze. It's maybe the best song I've heard all year. The B-side, which is more of a revved-up, *Raw Power*-ed number, is maybe slightly less memorable by comparison, but it also rules. Do yourself a favor and seek out a copy!

Reviewer: Alex Howell
Label: Anti-Fade / Drunken Sailor

THE MAKEBELIEVES – Someone Threw a Tiger Out the Window LP

A re-release of the MAKEBELIEVES' 2004 album, including a bonus track appended to the end, *Someone Threw a Tiger Out the Window* is twenty minutes of MC5 and STOOGES-style high-energy garage rock. As they were a Midwestern garage outfit in the early 2000s, comparisons to early WHITE STRIPES material make sense, although the urgency in these songs feel more natural than anything Jack White has carefully constructed. The vocals are a little one-note, and the band seems to only know one speed—there's a mid-tempo track sandwiched in halfway through, but beyond that, this is fast-fast-fast, with the understanding that things could collapse at any second. While there isn't too much variety to be found track to track, the caution-to-the-wind style that these seven tracks are played with does a pretty nice job of steadily building up tension from first note to last, and that made me want to stick around and see if they make it through to the end.

Reviewer: D. Gregory
Label: Good Times Rock N Roll Club

THE MANIKINS – Swedish Woods LP

Sweden and garage rock is one of those combinations that always seems to work, and *Swedish Woods* is another gleaming example that evinces this axiom. The MANIKINS have been churning out high-energy heat since the late '90s, and upon listening, one may be quick to think of the HIVES, fellow Swedes who formed a few years earlier. And while they would make a great double-bill to be sure, it would probably make more sense for the MANIKINS to play the afterparty—no coordinated suits, and a late night energy that you just want to keep going, sleep be damned. There's also a little more variety to be found throughout these twelve tracks than what you usually get from their contemporaries. *Swedish Woods* brings in elements of power pop ("Rosita"), as well as more straightforward rock sounds ("My Last Time,"). It's the soulful crooning and howling vocal delivery on "I Need To Tell You," however, that cements this album as a real standout.

Reviewer: D. Gregory
Label: Lövely

THE PIST – Right to Choose / Jim Martin 7″

Since reforming last year, the PIST has been very active, and can now log this 45 as another hallmark. Full of their signature style of streetwise hardcore and a barrage of gang vocals to boot, "Right to Choose" is an anthem for reproductive freedom and bodily autonomy, and also features additional vocalists from a host of East Coast punk bands. The reverse side, "Jim Martin," is an ode to punk rock champion Jim Martin and brings an even bigger serving of Oi!, definitely sing-along ready with a sort of bar rock energy. After releasing a fresh album and gigging regularly, it's astounding that the PIST has time to release a fresh artifact all in a year, but here it is and it rocks.

Reviewer: Seth McBurney
Label: Eugene

THE SLEEVEENS – UFOs / Bernadette 7″

The SLEEVEENS kind of blew up the garage punk interworlds when they released their debut album on Dirtnap this year. They came out of the Nashville scene, playing blistering garage punk like the OBLIVIANS with a MARKED MEN precision. They were tapped by I-94 for their Detroit covers series, where bands put an original song on one side of a 45 and a cover on the flipside. Here they turn their energy down a bit for a trippy, hypnotic garage burner called "UFOs" on the A-side. The B-side is their take of the FOUR TOPS classic "Bernadette" in a sped-up, anthemic blast.

Reviewer: Tim Janchar
Label: I-94

and grit baked into these songs while also shimmying them up mighty pretty. The playing is all top of class, especially the nimble guitar work and full-throated vocal performances. There's even a damn decent ballad in the mix, the surprisingly tender and bittersweet "For a While." The standout has to be the bombastic, melodic, and nearly operatic "Cooler Heads." It swings like an axe all the way to hell and back, ending in true chaotic clatter. There's not a note out of place on this record, but while that can sometimes read as too sterile, it only serves to bolster the true spirit of rock music and of this band.

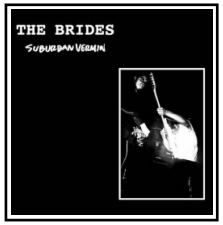
Reviewer: Luke Henley
Label: Slovenly

THATCHER'S SNATCH – White Collar Man EP

THATCHER'S SNATCH popped onto my radar a couple years ago with their brilliant self-titled debut EP, so I was excited to get my grubby paws on this follow-up. Straight away, the opening cut grabbed my attention with an eerily familiar bass line. They've torn more than a few pages from the UK82 songbook and used them to make a cut n' paste ransom note-cum-love letter addressed to cider-swillin', glue-sniffin' gutter punks the world over. Snippets of various influences poke through in each song, but it never comes off as cheap or contrived. That opening bass line I mentioned? It's a dead ringer for the riff from "Tube Disasters" by FLUX OF PINK INDIANS. Later in the song, when the chorus kicks in, the low register backing vocals are uncannily similar to those found in the classic VICE SQUAD anthem "Last Rockers." These recurring instances of homage are like cracked little easter eggs for spiky-haired nerds. I don't think most bands could pull this off without it seeming totally derivative, but THATCHER'S SNATCH have their sound (safety) pinned down so well that it bolsters the experience rather than tanking it. Highly recommended.

Reviewer: Matt Casteel
Label: Hardcore Victim

THE BRIDES – Suburban Vermin: 1996–98 LP



Now this rocks. Chicago punk is known for its vicious guitar sound, and this collection of '70s-influenced punk is a perfect example of that. It's pretty lo-fi due to most of it being demos and live recordings from the '90s, but I think it adds to the charm if anything. The vocals are pretty typical for a punk band, but I think the sheer energy the BRIDES display here is enough to warrant checking this LP out. I like the cover of CRIME's "Baby You're So Repulsive" a lot as well. The guitars are raunchy, the bass is groovy, the drums are hard. Listen to it.

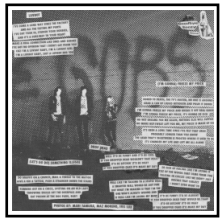
Reviewer: Neal Ray
Label: HoZac

THE CRACK – Walking on the Water LP

Not to be confused with the other proto-Oi! band with the same name, I'll take these guys. This LP is the band's whole story from '78-'80, a time capsule of perfect pints and songs of drama. The sound is all super tight and brolic pub pop with fringe elements of harmonizing guitars in the THIN LIZZY vein. Hard mod for sure, bluesy and at times metal. I think the best-of-the-LP award is obvious when you listen to "Sticky Kisses" and "Next Plane." Would love to see some live footage of them chopping away. I'll take another.

Reviewer: Johnny Leach
Label: Queen Mum

THE GOBS – Go Soft / Pop Off EP



My initial thought seeing this single was "Wow, a Goodbye Boozy band with songs that run longer than two minutes?" Took me a minute-and-a-half to realize that this isn't a single at all; the A and B-sides are just two different EPs. More lo-fi, synth-driven egg-punk that we've come to expect from this label. However, each song has a different vibe to it. There's a diverse range of gear used on each track, specifically the different drum machines featured throughout. The GOBS bounce back and forth between sounding like PRISON AFFAIR, '90s dream pop, and sinister darkwave. Really freshens things up and keeps them from sounding like the hundreds of other egg bands out there right now.

Reviewer: Jake Joyce
Label: Goodbye Boozy

THE JUDGES – Guns / (The People Want a) Show 7″

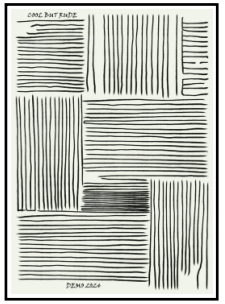
Hot on the heels of last year's great *Judgement Day* LP, these Aussie proto-punkers (featuring folks from LIVING EYES and CEREAL KILLER) are back to sentence us to another nine minutes of riff! Here we're getting two exceptional tracks wrapped in one excellent sleeve. Folks, this is how you make a 7"! The A-side, "Guns," is a five-and-a-half minute dirge built on a two-and-a-half-chord riff, estab-

COMPULSION / WRONG WAR – split LP

This split LP from Chicago's COMPULSION and WRONG WAR, released by Council Records, features five tracks from each band. WRONG WAR, featuring former members from CURRENT, OTTAWA, and the PHENOMS, delivers energetic and driving songs that incorporate spacious arrangements and interesting guitar work. Their songwriting, paired with Matthias Weeks' powerful vocals, harkens back to some of those late-'80s/early-'90s Dischord bands while retaining that classic Chicago hardcore drive. This is some great shit. COMPULSION's side maintains a lot of the energy found in WRONG WAR's tracks but sacrifices the refinement. Their gritty, mid-tempo hardcore is punctuated by Ebro Virumbrales' bellowing vocals and an abundance of self-indulgent guitar licks. This side is recommended for fans of BLACK FLAG. Check out: "Profit Net" by WRONG WAR.

Reviewer: Jeff Cost
Label: Council

COOL BUT RUDE – Demo 2024 cassette



Riffy and bouncy hardcore with a metal sheen from NY two-piece COOL BUT RUDE. Citing inspiration from bands like VIAGRA BOYS, DRAIN, and TURNSTILE, something tells me these guys don't take themselves too seriously, and frankly, it's refreshing to hear a band that doesn't try to mug like tough guys playing this stuff. I think it's what keeps these songs as light and bouncy as they are. In any event, I like it, and while not something I'll necessarily go back to over and over again, I give them credit for putting out these well-produced and catchy six tracks.

Reviewer: Eric Anderson
Label: self-released

CŒUR À L'INDEX – Adieu Minette LP

DOLLY MIXTURE references have been turning up so often in relation to the current wave of punks playing pop music that we might be witnessing the dawn of a new D(OLLY)-beat—the Brussels-based trio CŒUR À L'INDEX falls squarely into that camp, with a debut LP that's eight sugar-coated servings of girl-group-inspired harmonies and pastel-tinted guitar jangle. Maybe it's the crystalline French-language vocals and the clean, crisp recording (*très* power pop), but the '60s-via-'80s striped-shirt bubblegum beat of "Rattrapez-Moi" and "Loin D'ici" had my thoughts immediately wandering to LES CALAMITÉS rather than DOLLY MIXTURE, while the plaintive "Parler de Toi" and "Ca M'ira" bear the afterimage of late '00s/early '10s C86 revivalists BRILLIANT COLORS, or flipping back further in the singles box, TALULAH GOSH. I'm sure it's only a matter of time until this renewed interest in pure pop for punk dreamers is completely run into the ground by lesser bandwagon-jumpers, so savor the sweet treat of *Adieu Minette* while you can.

Reviewer: Erika Elizabeth
Label: La Vida Es Un Mus

DEAD ENDS – Second Coming LP

German label Merciless Records has recently reissued the works of seminal Philippines act DEAD ENDS, including this remastered version of the band's second LP from 1987. Featuring thirteen tunes full of energy and attitude, this classic record incorporates a range of influences. At times it invokes *Bedtime for Democracy*-era DEAD KENNEDYS, there are poppy ballads that remind me of older Japanese bands like HUSKING BEE, and also sing-along tracks along the lines of OPERATION IVY. It's an interesting little piece of history that likely would have otherwise dwindled in obscurity.

Reviewer: Jason Harding
Label: Merciless

DIODE – 2 LP

If you're still riding high on the eggy synth punk wave, check out L.A.-based DIODE. Wobbly synths tangle and arpeggiate into warped pop experiments with vocals that remind me of C.C.T.V. While many bands of this ilk tend to include a keyboard line over garage punk, DIODE has a distinct post-punk skeleton, and they aren't afraid to venture down a dissonant path for a measure or two. Right in the middle lies "Card Dealer," a beautiful, heart-tugging pop song with Kim Gordon-style vocals and a buzzing hook that burrows deep. Killer song and great record overall.

Reviewer: Nick Odorizzi
Label: Under the Gun

DISARM – Existence Demo 1985 LP

My first thought was that this would be DISARM from Sweden, but this band was from Virginia. They played hardcore that at times approached crossover thrash in the vein of CORROSION OF CONFORMITY and sometimes early D.R.I., and even a little first album SUICIDAL TENDENCIES. There are a lot of other influences, but those stood out to me right away. I am always happy to find old bands that I haven't heard before, so a big thanks to Beach Impediment Records for bringing this to us all. Great listen, and I immediately knew I was listening to hardcore from the '80s.

Reviewer: Bill Chamberlain
Label: Beach Impediment

DISTRÜST – Under the Knife cassette

DISTRÜST from San Salvador released this ten-song cassette more than a year ago, but somehow it still sounds current. True D-beat aficionados, DISTRÜST hammers with the speed and intensity of early DISCHARGE but also sporadically mixes in things that remind me of bands like NAILBOMB, DISFEAR, or RIISTETYT. The closing track "Falling in the Process" has a pummeling instrumental opening which then proceeds to go into a song that leans very hard into the metal side of things. The production value seems improved over previous DISTRÜST sessions, which I appreciate. The minute-and-thirty-second ballistic attack of "The Future is Far From Us" is perhaps my favorite song on the album with its relatively straightforward D-beat hardcore. *Under the Knife* is definitely worth getting ahold of and is a solid output from DISTRÜST.

Reviewer: Seth McBurney
Label: Extreme Conditions Demand Extreme Music

DOC HOPPER – Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something Blew cassette

Simply put, this album is a safety-pinned smörgåsbord of covers, original songs, and leftovers across the decades of DOC HOPPER's reign, meant to be parsed through and enjoyed. You easily hear the band's chemistry upon listening, as they create a punk language between themselves, usually an invention of bands who just know what the fuck they're doing. From start to finish, it includes masterful screeching riffs, thundering bass lines, and excitable drums all starting and stopping along each other's axis. Lyrically, it's comprised mostly of hedonistic hail-marys spewed by vocalist Greg Hoffman, best demonstrated in the cover of "Drink, Fight, and Fuck," by GG ALLIN, definitely making ALLIN proud if he could listen from hell. This release takes you for a joy ride, ranging from "Shirt…Lose It…Now" and its beautiful caterwauling guitar, to "The State of Maine Song," which ends the party on a calmer note of comradery. Creating alcoholic anthems and punk rock classics since the '90s, they maintain a similar sound to SINKHOLE, their New England scene peers, and even share drummer Chris Pierce. Overall, *Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something Blew* is a peak Frankenstein lab creation of punk hardiness through the eras.

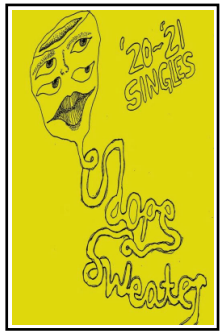
Reviewer: Fiona Rae
Label: Dead Broke

DOLOR DE MUELAS – EP cassette

Rudimentary punk from Chile here with a scrappy DIY spirit. Made using little more than youthful spirit and a few chords, it has a simple charm and classic themes of restlessness, anger, and discontent. And the band's name translates to "Toothache."

Reviewer: Jason Harding
Label: Junko

DOPE SWEATER – '20–'21 Singles cassette



The long-running, self-proclaimed "Indiana garage punk kings" return with an unorthodox release. Recorded during the height of COVID isolation, the three members of this band recorded their own parts alone and sent files to one another to create what we have before us. Six songs which span a lot of ground stylistically—personally, I much prefer the dingy garage/JAY REATARD-inspired tunes to the somewhat more meandering, long psychedelic jams, but on a whole, this is a cool release with some damn good songs and an interesting tale. Physical copies limited to 25.

Reviewer: Biff Bifaro
Label: XTRO

erwise on the "punk" side of the ledger (grimy and spare instead of epic and layered). As usual, I think the run time here is excessive. As Coco Chanel said, "Before you go out, take a look in the mirror and remove one track."

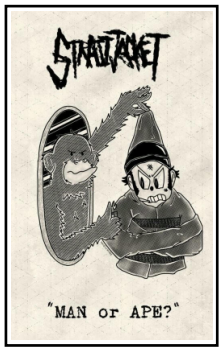
Reviewer: Dov Malzberg
Label: Nejförfan / Prank

SKULLPRESSER – Positions of Power LP

This meet-cute of Pennsylvania punks puts on a convincing face for metallic hardcore that tinges on crossover and emo, ultimately resulting in a satisfying blend of styles that cohere into something imminently moshable. It nearly resembles the early blackened rock'n'roll of Norway's KVELERTAK, at least in the emotional pull it has and its frosty twin guitar licks. It's heavy, but not dangerous. Cuddly and pissed at the same time, and I don't mean that in a condescending way. Purveyors of metallic hardcore have been broadening the appeal of the niche for years now, and ultimately I think it's a good thing to have a little goddamn fun when you're opening up the pit. That said, if you're looking for the meanest, gnarliest shit, this is not it. But again, I think that's a good thing. These are solid ragers with a lot of stylistic changeups that put a smile on my face. And the band is gracious enough to include their debut self-titled EP on Side B. The new stuff hits a little harder, which only shows they're headed in the right direction. Many a windmill kick will be inspired by tracks like "Chained," which even throws in some nu-metal influence, now that we all realize we can admit we still bop to SLIPKNOT, and even more so the furious closing track "The World Can See," which brings proper epic pomp to cap things off. This record is a blast.

Reviewer: Luke Henley
Label: Born Losers

STRAITJACKET – Man or Ape? cassette



Applying sore-throated, demonic vocals over some raging basement punk, Williamsburg's STRAITJACKET gives us five songs of old-fashioned DIY stomping and ripping. Sentiments of anger have always been a popular catalyst for crazy kids starting a band, but sheer weirdness has become just as common. So now, I barely bat an eye when someone inexplicably yells "I love lemon!" over some unplugged electric noodling at the end of "Beyond Repair," or when I see that they've included a song entitled "Taxidermy Vape." Those are just tropes of 2024 wacky-core.

Reviewer: Jason Harding
Label: XTRO

SUBDUED – Abattoir LP

SUBDUED is from London, and I feel a definite anarcho-punk vibe from the band—ZYGOTE and EXITSTANCE, and maybe even a little bit of SACRILEGE immediately came to mind. This entire album makes me feel like it's dusk no matter what time the clock says it is. The lyrics are as thought-provoking as they are dark. They are filled with substance and not mindless songs about nothing important. This is a great album, and one of my favorites of the year.

Reviewer: Bill Chamberlain
Label: La Vida Es Un Mus

SVAVELDIOXID – Främmande Samtid Str ämmande Framtid 10″

Total kängpunk earannihilation from the absolute country of Sweden! No gimmicks, just plain DISCHARGE-styled hardcore the way that ANTI-CIMEX used to preach. These käng purists learned the lesson well and follow the school of *Anarkist Attack* (if the name of the band wasn't already a clue). Recorded at the legendary Sunlight Studios, which helped to put the HM-2w pedal on the map and crafted the crunchiest guitar sound ever through bands like ENTOMBED and DISMEMBER—SVAVELDIOXID used and abused this pedal and unleashed a barrage of chainsaw guitar hardcore on this latest record. Playing this type of sound since 2015 really allowed them to perfect the formula. If it ain't broken, don't fix it!

Reviewer: João Seixas
Label: Phobia

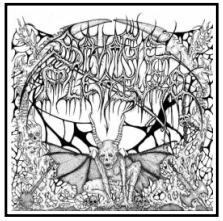
TH' LOSIN STREAKS – Last House LP

Rock'n'roll serves those who give themselves to it completely. I know a band of lifers when I hear one, and it's always exciting. This Sacramento group has been around, and while this grip of tracks doesn't exactly break new ground for them, it cuts like a knife through the pale flab of pretenders that make up most of contemporary garage. There are more polished R&B affairs stacked next to ferocious and fiercely-paced ragers like the hook-laden "Cake and Ice Cream Too," plus everything in between. The production really shines, somehow keeping the piss

getic riffs and an undeniable youthful energy. Going as fast as possible and with a chip on their shoulders, they managed to add a unique flavor to their hardcore roots. Each of the 45 songs on this compilation of their demos is explosive, showcasing the band's short trajectory and also adding in some rare recordings from the band's beginning. Hardcore purists, get your hands on this one.

Reviewer: João Seixas
Label: F.O.A.D.

SAVAGE PLEASURE – Savage Pleasure LP



Sick metal punk with spiky, sharp rhythms and distorted to the fullest. Fast-paced cadences filled with a filth and precision that could intoxicate advocates of metallic forms of punk, with two spoonfuls of powerviolence in it. Feels like a dark chamber of doomed figures between the final two tracks, the last of which ("Chasm of Distant Dreams") is a bit more than five minutes in length that's well worth the spin. Endure the intro. Recommended.

Reviewer: Gonza Perez
Label: Toxic State

SCOLERI BROTHERS – Scoleri Brothers cassette

A hardcore three-piece from Pennsylvania, SCOLERI BROTHERS play songs that have an early '00s metalcore vibe on their self-titled and self-released cassette. I tried to find out more about these guys, but all the internet spit out when I searched their name was info on the characters from *Ghostbusters*, so that was a dead end. Overall, the music here is cool, it's well-played enough, but I've never been a fan of this vocal style. Over the years I've given bands who have a similar sound a shot and just don't really get it. But hey, music is subjective and that's the beauty of it. This isn't for me, but maybe it's for you.

Reviewer: Eric Anderson
Label: self-released

SCONTRO – What Else Can I Do? cassette

Debut full-length release from this Portland, OR "socially conscious punk rock band." Eleven songs of very slickly recorded and produced "punk rock," with politically-driven lyrics strongly front and center. There are some cool guitar leads, the bass licks on some of the songs are driving and catchy, but the nature of the lyrical style and delivery left me feeling as if I had just attended a lecture. I absolutely see the point of intermingling political views with music, and the importance of entry-level political stances as a way to share ideas and thoughts to newcomers, I just personally could do without feeling like I just experienced an auditory Ludovico Technique.

Reviewer: Biff Bifaro
Label: Razor

SIEGE FIRE – The Devastating Cost LP

Now this is a convenient assignment: SIEGE FIRE's first album *The Devastating Cost* (a reference to contemporary shipping prices in the States, I believe) might end up in my Top Ten of 2024. If they send me a bribe, they definitely will be in it. This noisy bunch comes from Portland and was originally a studio-only project from Mike (who also lends his talent to the rather great GENOGEIST and DECOMP), having released a tape in 2021 before morphing into a proper band by which you can be deafened with the help of people from LOCKHEED and NYX DIVISION. The drummer on this LP is on absolute fire, and to be honest, he really has to be, since the main influence behind SIEGE FIRE is the mighty FRAMTID, a band known for its crazy and intense drumming remarkable for its variations, sick drum rolls, and punishing bollocking power. The Portland unit clearly borrows from this rhythmic tradition that goes back to GLOOM, and their heavy reliance on distortion certainly confirms that they shoot for the crasher crust stars. I would locate them somewhere between FRAMTID and D-CLONE with a modern crazy noise-punk twist in their use of fuzz (not unlike the Melbourne scene, notably), and very much in tune with contemporary bands like PHYSIQUE, HORRENDOUS 3D, or KINETIC ORBITAL STRIKE. In such a noisy and brutal subgenre, it can be difficult to maintain the listener's engaging attention, and I think SIEGE FIRE manages to achieve that for the length of an LP thanks to some welcome mid-paced scorchers showing some sort of reflexivity from the band in terms of songwriting. Another good one on Black Water, from a place that never ceases to amaze.

Reviewer: Romain Basset
Label: Black Water

SKAMFLÄCK – Synka Alla Klockor för Midnatt LP

First off, the cover here arrives in the grand tradition of cartoony depictions of apocalyptic dystopias (think *Cause for Alarm* or *The Day the Country Died*): a grim vision of reality via rounded lines and primary color. The music is a few sibling genres held together by a very metallic crust punk. There are some capital-M metal riffs, but the guitars are oth-

EASERS – Easers cassette

Three-piece garage punk from Grand Rapids, MI. Twelve songs of driving, no-nonsense, SPITS-esque mid-tempo punk. Speed revs up a bit on a couple of the songs, but the real charm of EASERS is in the straightforward, mid-tempo songs. Nasty lo-fi recording fits the band really well. Keep it simple, keep it gross, keep me coming back for more.

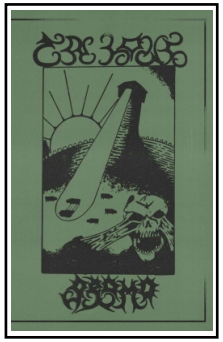
Reviewer: Biff Bifaro
Label: Painters Tapes

EL DESTELLO – Destruiremos Su Civilización cassette

From the warm streets of Barcelona, this one-man project makes a unique release with a cold sound, electrifying hooks, and captivating lyrics. David, who also lends his talent to IRREAL and ALGARA, uses traditional post-punk elements with emphasis on the punk, creating a sound that is both nostalgic and fresh. Drawing inspiration from iconic '80s Spanish dark-wave bands such as DÉCIMA VÍCTIMA, EL DESTELLO crafts songs that echo the emotions of the human experience drenched in social revolt. What sets EL DESTELLO apart from the myriad of bands in the genre is the perfect blend of darkness and light that invites listeners to dance while contemplating the struggles of life. A compelling mix of rhythm and meaning.

Reviewer: João Seixas
Label: Atemptat Sonor

EN LOVE – Promo cassette



EN LOVE surprised me when I saw them earlier this year at The Floor is Gone fest. "Capital H" harcore doesn't typically appeal to me, but these Clevelanders inject enough elements of punk and powerviolence into their songs to set them apart. Their sound is thick and chunky with tempo changes ranging from metallic breakdowns to blastbeats, with the requisite stops in between. The vocalist sounds legitimately pissed-off, which I appreciate since I find the element of anger in most bands of this genre to be performative at best. EN LOVE gets right to the point too, with nary a song busting the two-minute mark. This would fit well into the Convulse Records catalog, so if that's your thing, be sure to give this a listen.

Reviewer: Matt Casteel
Label: Delayed Gratification

ENOLA GAY / PHANTOM – split LP

A post-mortem collection of the Łódź, Poland-based post-punk group PHANTOM, who formed in 1979 and later renamed themselves ENOLA GAY in the mid-'80s, so the "split" status here is more that of a split mirror. To make things especially confusing, the five songs on the A-side were all recorded as ENOLA GAY in 1983, while the five B-side tracks are 1984 recordings credited to PHANTOM, so I'm assuming the name change must have been fairly temporary? PHANTOM reportedly started out by covering the likes of the STRANGLERS and GARY NEWMAN, and the influence of the latter is definitely perceptible in the unnerved, slightly androgynous delivery of vocalist Bogusia Michalonka and the syncopated new wave backing of the band's ENOLA GAY iteration—the synth-squealing anxiety of "Grzybobranie" is basically a *Replicas* replica (but a really good one). It's total android oddness on that half of the record, while the PHANTOM tracks put a touch more emphasis on the shrouded doom and gloom that was a hallmark of Eastern Bloc post-punk. The lurching rhythms and anguished undead howls of "Dusseldorf" gesture toward the death drone of early 4AD fixtures REMA-REMA, as the synth-forward "Puszka" and "Marionetka" split off in the direction of an elastic, danceable sound that's vaguely NDW-like. Like so many bands who operated behind the Iron Curtain, ENOLA GAY and PHANTOM were never properly documented in their own time, but the labels behind this LP have really been putting in the work to preserve the histories of the Polish punk underground, and these songs were certainly worth rescuing.

Reviewer: Erika Elizabeth
Label: No Pasaran / Underground Factory / Warsaw Punk

EPOXI – Demo 2023 cassette

Bloomington, IN hardcore punkers deliver this five-track cassette in less than ten minutes, filled with strident drums and ever-ranting vocals that never seem to stop delivering screams. You can extract and see the punk roots of this project, as it gives the feeling of something done extremely DIY with sufficient execution levels, like a homemade tape that has that special crunchiness and crust that all well-appreciated DIY projects exude. Indiana punks dripping

with attitude in each beat. It's interesting enough to wait for more.

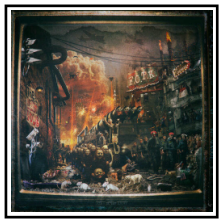
Reviewer: Gonza Perez
Label: Richter Scale / Upset Condition

FEAR OF EXTINCTION / UTSATT – split LP

FEAR OF EXTINCTION is from Prague and plays some pretty epic crust, truly a wall of sound. They remind me of WOLFPACK and a few of the other bands that were on Distortion Records back in the '90s, and they are a perfect pairing with UTSATT. UTSATT is from Sweden and features members of 3-WAY CUM, WARCOLLAPSE, VERDICT, EXPLOATÖR, MEANWHILE, and more. This sounds like classic Swedish hardcore, because it is. Top-notch stuff. Great album for fans of Swedish hardcore punk and crust alike.

Reviewer: Bill Chamberlain
Label: Byebye Productions / Phobia

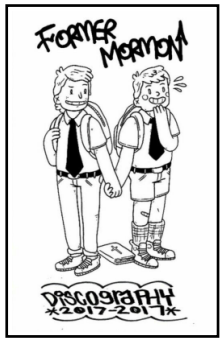
FEAR OF THE KNOWN – The Last Songs LP



LP debut for this DIY crust punk supergroup, featuring members of CHAOS UK, DISORDER, WAR//PLAGUE, and others, holding an interesting ethos and way of recording (which was mostly virtual, with no direct physical interaction between band members in the making), and intended as a critique of the actual state of punk today and its links with protest and critical thinking and doing. Even recorded separately, the recording and mixing efforts make the fact that they are all separated while executing it almost untraceable. Coming from this selection of band members, you are getting a high-quality album with no less than fifteen tracks that never seem to stop giving riffage, and hardcore vocals that rise on the Lemmy side of punk from time to time. The crust punk influence is strong on this one. Suggested tracks: "Democracy Hammered" and "Divide & Rot." Interesting, give it a spin.

Reviewer: Gonza Perez
Label: Organize and Arise / Phobia

FORMER MORMON – Discography 2017–2017 cassette



Complete discography cassette of a band that seems to have been wildly active for only a handful of months in the year 2017. At first glance, FORMER MORMON had me thinking there was a "too many cooks"-type situation going on. With songs ranging somewhat wildly stylistically from track to track, it was easy to assess that maybe there were multiple songwriters all bringing their own ideas to the table. Turns out that wasn't the case at all. A few of their releases credit a single songwriter, which was somewhat surprising. FORMER MORMON seems to be the missing link between Bay Area pop punk stuff, by-the-numbers fastcore, and a little sprinkling of the MINUTEMEN tossed in for good measure—I didn't realize these were things that had a missing link between them. Limited edition of 25 cassette copies.

Reviewer: Biff Bifaro
Label: Knuckles on Stun

G2G – The Gherkin LP

A modern OZ DIY throwback to the neo-ELASTICA snappiness of those two killer PRIMETIME singles (from a literal decade ago now?!), and on the other side of the '90s inspiration coin, the Slampt Records-adjacent girl gang sound of SKINNED TEEN, PUSSYCAT TRASH, and LUNG LEG. Like all of those bands, G2G takes an economical approach to post-punk that is clearly borne out of collaboration, friendship, and creative trust, where the whole is, by design, far more than the sum of its parts—Angelica, Georgia, and Greta's vocals criss-cross in roundabout call-and-responses and converge as a unified front of spoken/sung chants, as barbed twin guitar lines intersect with one another over steady, stomping beats from new recruit Daniel Stewart (of UV RACE/TOTAL CONTROL, replacing the drum machine from G2G's 2020 debut EP), a deceptively minimalist but solidly grounded sonic framework. "Animated Satisfaction," the hands-down hit from their previous 7", gets a reboot here, and it's a glorious pile-on of needling guitar and three-part shouts tearing apart the rituals of modern romance ("Tell me about the laws of attraction / I'm itchy and particular with my time / Doesn't matter, I don't mind"). The buzzing "Up" is equally great, nailing ELASTICA's loving WIRE worship minus any fear of potential lawsuits, and the LILIPUT-esque "Pop Song" makes it obvious that its title isn't at all tongue-in-cheek, from the subtle "la la la" backing vocals buried in the mix between verses to the soaring harmonies over handclaps and the frenetic

RABBIT – Bardo EP

RABBIT's latest EP *Bardo* is a melting pot of styles; death metal, punk, powerviolence, metallic hardcore, all stewing together to create a sonically powerful and satisfying EP that will appeal to a wide audience, not unlike their most cited influence GULCH. The thrash influence of the Big Four is especially evident on tracks like "Tail Wags Dog" and "Anti-Priest Summons Baphomet," whose stink-face-inducing riffs and over-the-top vocals would satisfy even the pickiest of metalheads. Extra points for the amazing artwork, a consistent feature of all of RABBIT's releases so far. Excited to hear what they've got coming next.

Reviewer: Eric Anderson
Label: Delayed Gratification

RABID CHILDREN – Does the Heartbeat LP

Not quite sure how to categorize these guys, but I'd say somewhere in the noise pop/experimental rock realm. The album kicked off with some great noise and gloomy vibes, and each song that followed was unique to the one prior, with some nice tempo changes. It slowly became more pop than rock as the album progressed. The ghost-like keyboard sounds were a unifier throughout the album, which I thoroughly enjoyed. To somewhat finish off the album, the mega solo in "Other Dreams" definitely felt like I was being exported to some other world; truly rad. Overall, I tended to like the first couple of tracks the best as they were the most experimental, but I thought that this LP was a gloomy good time.

Reviewer: Emma Miller
Label: Lorco

RED CROSS – 1981–1982 No Message LP

Richmond, Virginia's RED CROSS serves up a potent dose of early '80s hardcore punk with their album *1981–1982 No Message*. Originally intended as their debut LP in 1982, the album was shelved when the band broke up before its release. It later appeared in a very limited cassette run, but this marks its first appearance on vinyl after over 40 years. The fourteen tracks, clocking in at about twenty-five minutes, are a straight-up blast of early hardcore energy, with some songs sounding like they could have been missing tracks from *This is Boston, Not L.A.* The singer's voice sometimes carries a bit of a Tesco Vee snarl. The album kicks off strong and fast, but the momentum stutters a bit on Side B. It wraps up with a live track and a humorous radio spot, providing a touch of nostalgia. Members went on to form the mighty WHITE CROSS, making this release an interesting document of Richmond's hardcore lineage.

Reviewer: Jeff Cost
Label: Beach Impediment

REHASH – Aktion Reaktion! 12″

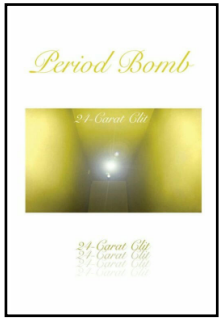
The Berlin-based Mangel label has cornered the market when it comes to the sort of tense, calculated throwback post-punk that's been popping off in Germany and Belgium over the last several years, so they're a logical landing place for the debut offering from Antwerp's REHASH. Sternly shouted vocals are split more or less evenly between English and German, and the band's rhythms are agitated but clockwork-precise, cut through with guitar that writhes and scratches like GANG OF FOUR stripped of their overt funk leanings. Plot a line from *Pink Flag*-era WIRE's spartan, propulsive grooves to early '80s Zickzack brutalism to the post-millennial downer punk of DIÄT to (very) recent Mangel-backed acts like LIIEK and PLEXI STAD, and you'll land right at REHASH. The standout "Kunsthochschule" strikes with a serrated, EX-like urgency, and even though I don't understand a word of German, I'd like to believe that the intersecting vocals have a similarly pointed political bent—the title translates to "Art School," and speaking as someone who works at one, there's plenty to critique there. Some of the other four tracks could stand to have a little fat trimmed (see: the jarring tempo downshift in the middle of the four-minute-pushing "King of Weimar"), but when they're lean, it's mean.

Reviewer: Erika Elizabeth
Label: Mangel

SATANS CHEERLEADERS – What the Hell: Complete Recordings 1982–1986 2xLP

Active in the mid-'80s, SATAN'S CHEERLEADERS were a standout, often underlooked band in the New York hardcore scene. They might have gone under the radar due to the boom in hardcore bands coming from their vicinity, but now it's impossible to miss them due to the internet and avid record catalogers such as F.O.A.D. Records, who released their discography on vinyl, along with other Unsound releases such as INSANITY DEFENSE and FATAL VISION (both bands adjacent to SATAN'S CHEERLEADERS). Their sound is pure raw hardcore punk, driven by frantically ener-

PERIOD BOMB – 24–Carat Clit cassette



Miami-based project that blends no wave, weirdo pop, and electro-punk into a sound that is hard to pin down but often exciting. Opening track "Melodaze" sounds like a CHICKS ON SPEED and SCREAMERS collab, drum machines and synths colliding with nonchalantly spoken vocals. "No Puedo Ser Nada" flips the chaos switch, evoking a feral LYDIA LUNCH locked in a closet. "Deal with God" continues this no wave streak with atonal singing and a squawking saxophone in the background. Standout track "Might Not Survive" showcases the band at their best—an otherworldly KATE BUSH-style mutant ballad played out over rolling bass and a disco beat. The unique sound and theatricality of singer Cami's voice hearkens back to the early "anything goes" days of L.A. punk and is worth a listen. FYI, ARIEL PINK, guest on *Tucker Carlson* and a visitor to a particular rally involving a former president, did some production work on this and released a split tape with the band. Make of that what you will.

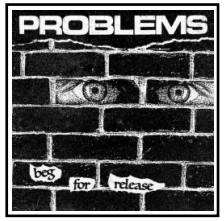
Reviewer: Nick Odorizzi
Label: Crass Lips

PIG RIDES – Demo 2024 cassette

Six-song debut demo cassette clocking in at under ten minutes long. This demo could be three times its length and I would still be thirsty for more. Relentless, grimy hardcore punk which is undeniably from Cleveland, Ohio. The "members of" list would surely be too long to navigate, as the band is comprised of a bunch of long running freakers steering this ship. Most notable, to me anyway, is that the vocals are done by the singer from TV DRUGS, and at least one other member is from the oft-overlooked powerhouse KILL THE HIPPIES. Very cool first release. Can't wait to take my next pig ride.

Reviewer: Biff Bifaro
Label: self-released

PROBLEMS – Beg for Release EP



Hailing from Oslo, Norway, PROBLEMS release a thrashing hardcore attack on this seven-song EP. It's an orgy of powerful, pounding sound that starts off intense and never lets up. Meaty and menacing, it's the kind of stuff where the singer makes little noises of disgust from time to time between belting out the lyrics, and the energy of anger is strongly palpable. You could be in a great mood, put this on, and ten minutes later, you're totally pissed. Which I think is a compliment?

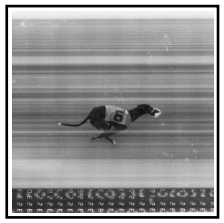
Reviewer: Jason Harding
Label: Adult Crash

PUST – Pust cassette

Flying straight out the gate, PUST bursts forth with an absolute stomper of a track. "La Faute De La Boîte" is an undeniable punk banger! A self-proclaimed "probably (egg)punk" band from Montreal, which I admittedly don't hear one bit. The reoccurring "ooh"s alone push PUST much closer to chain than egg on that musical spectrum we all acknowledge as being reality in the modern day. Admittedly, the rest of the songs don't hold the same intensity as the opening track, but that track alone is worth flipping the tape over and over to get to hear it again and again. The opening build-up into plodding riff is sure to have the listener pogo-ing around their bedroom. I would wager that track could go head-to-head with any hype NYC hardcore punk band over the last grip of years.

Reviewer: Biff Bifaro
Label: self-released

QITSCH – No Shame LP



Second LP from Schaffhausen, Switzerland's QITSCH. Eleven tracks of wall-of-sound layered synths with phaser and tremolo, vocals soaked in reverb, and fairly unaffected bass and a standard acoustic drum kit, paired with this otherwise very electronic, ambient soundscape. Vast, feedback-laden grooves propel the album forward in mid-tempo stride with an oppressive, grayscale shimmer, often slowing further on songs like "The Smile on Your Lips." For fans of the more experimental SONIC YOUTH tracks.

Reviewer: Willis Schenk
Label: Order05

strum of an acoustic guitar in the choruses. Eight freewheeling tracks, short and sweet, a real winner.

Reviewer: Erika Elizabeth
Label: Lulu's Sonic Disc Club

G.O.O.N. – God's Only Option Now LP

As the pile of modern hardcore records heightens at speeds previously unseen, the number of them that can be considered "meaningful" entries sharply decreases. There has to be some established mathematical principle that applies to this conundrum, and, whatever it is, Denver's G.O.O.N. triumphantly defies it with their latest release. On this follow-up to their excellent 2019 debut *Natural Evil*, they cook up a big, decompressed, and scathing sound with unhinged vocals. For lack of a more apt comparison, it's along the lines of beloved 2010s miscreant BLACK PANTIES singing for a darker and beefier CEMENT SHOES. With the exception of the five-minute-plus cover of the classic proto-punk PINK FAIRIES incantation "Do It," the songs here are brief, yet potent, each hinting at potential progressions for this up-and-coming band. I wouldn't mind witnessing a lengthy evolution of this promising style.

Reviewer: Jason Harding
Label: Convulse

GEFYR / RAT CAGE – split EP

I had only heard maybe half of a song by GEFYR before this record, and I was definitely surprised by how great this record is. They are from Sweden and you sure can hear it in the music—there is a huge '90s influence, whether we are talking about STATE OF FEAR or any of the '90's bands from Sweden. I was surprised and excited by how great the GEFYR side of the record is. I moved on to the RAT CAGE side and I had a pretty good idea of what to expect, and I sure wasn't disappointed. This is some hard-hitting hardcore punk from both of these bands. On this split, RAT CAGE sounds like they are in top form. There are a lot of influences here, but to me, they just sound like RAT CAGE. Hardcore punk with a little bit of melody like all of my favorite bands. This is another one of my favorite records this year.

Reviewer: Bill Chamberlain
Label: Bunker Punks

GINO AND THE GOONS / HIGH HEELS – split LP

The HIGH HEELS are in excellent form on this split. I hadn't heard of them until this LP, but I like what I hear on this. Nice fuzzy guitars, hard-hitting drums, and warm bass. I was at first dumbfounded by the fact that there were old Hanna-Barbara-era *Scooby Doo* villains on the cover, but now hearing the music, it makes a lot more sense. Even though I'd say it's most certainly garage rock, it has a spookier vibe than most when it comes to the vocals, and I think that's what sets it apart. Good stuff, check it out if you like some fuzz on your guitars.

Reviewer: Neal Ray
Label: Chumpire

GOB PSYCHIC – Rent Payer EP

These Danes wear a contemporary Melbourne punk influence on their sleeves, but this snappy trio of tracks burns its own rubber on its own terms. Catchy, angry, and with a satisfying motorik approach to rhythm, these odes to alienation hit just right. There's a tinge of early 2000s garage rock revival that the band might disavow, but it adds catchiness to the mix that carries you through the somewhat bloated runtime of a track like "Dead Intruder." There are good ideas here executed well and with an authentic edge that never once feels like a put-on. I can't wait to hear more!

Reviewer: Luke Henley
Label: Slovenly

GOBLIN SHARK – Rat Bone CD

Garage is in a tough position, having gone through revivals too many times to count, and frankly it is difficult for it not to sound somewhat stale when not trying to do something altogether singular. With that preamble in mind, sorry to say, this doesn't quite refresh the genre to my ears. There's plenty of energy and songcraft on display, plus a sort of gonzo theatrical edge, but rather than the anarchic roots of the genre, what we get here is something a little safe despite all its best efforts to seem wild and dangerous. Partly to blame is the production, with the vocals way up front and sounding like BEEFHEART sucked on a lozenge. Everything else is a little too compressed, the fuzz a little too trimmed. There are good moments to be sure, like the licks in "Human Fountain" that harken to the guitar work in underground legends like GROUNDHOGS. But

even then, it feels these moments come from reference points across time and not from some wellspring of true rock'n'roll inspiration.

Reviewer: Luke Henley
Label: Voodoo Rhythm

H,K, – Now is the Time to Change the Earth (1989–2024 Best of H,K,) CD

H,K, from Shizuoka, Japan formed in 1989, and this is a collection of tracks drawn from various tapes, compilations, and splits recorded between 1991 and 2005. Unlike some of their contemporaries, H,K,'s brand of hardcore doesn't rely so heavily on speed or thrash elements; instead, they weave a melodic thread through many of their songs that softens their sound. Kili's wavering vocals frequently evoke the spirit of Jello Biafra, and I enjoyed their use of gang/backing vocals. Many of the tracks tend to run longer than typical hardcore offerings, with ten out of twenty-four songs exceeding three minutes. While the sound quality starts off a bit rough in the earliest recordings, it notably improves in the later tracks. The entire collection grew on me over time, but I think my favorite songs come from the *Shuzuoka Hardcore* comp. Check out: "Discrimination Violence."

Reviewer: Jeff Cost
Label: Black Konflik

HEAVEN – Stagnant Dream EP

I like the name of this band which must be taken, I suppose, as an ironic comment on not just the state of the world, but also of the US of A, and even of Texas, a place I have never visited but that I imagine to be populated by hard men looking like Steve Austin. What a sight. I had given a listen to HEAVEN's first steps into the scary world of hardcore with their 2022 EP *Starless Moonlight*, already on Iron Lung, and if it was too US hardcore-oriented for my liking, it was still a solid record. Two years have passed, and they don't really sound like the same band (the lineup apparently changed). This new EP is punishing enough, but I am sadly not totally convinced. I like when the band goes for a primitive early crust vibe à la DOOM/ENT, like on "Stagnant Dream" (I love the vocals, reminiscent of Tom Croft's), but on the whole, the songwriting has that modern stomping tupa-tupa hardcore vibe with mosh parts that is effective and so popular these days but often leaves me unimpressed. It is not a bad record, far from it, but I was hoping for a crustier experience.

Reviewer: Romain Basset
Label: Iron Lung

HOAX / MOTRON – split LP

Split effort coming from Italy with seven tracks per project, including a cover on each side, supported by multi-cooperative DIY labels. Motör-charged dis-punkers to the fullest, with superb cover art of a dystopian family couch for this album. MOTRON is more on the metal punk side of Lemmy's moon, holding a grip of darker, gloomier tones in their charging, doom-thriving bass lines, mid-paced, rock-solid drums, and deep, angry, guttural vocals confronting almost mirrored guitar sections and minor riffage. Suggested track: "Lack of Shame." HOAX goes for faster-paced cadences and sickened, steadier vocals, with a more distorted approach in the strings but keeping classical rhythms in their charged situation. Suggested track: "On Your Grave."

Reviewer: Gonza Perez
Label: Angry Voice / Autoproduzioni DIY / Bolo Punx / Born to Waste / Nothing to Harvest / Pasidaryk Pats / Phobia

HUMAN TROPHY – Primary Instinct LP

Wow, this is a wild listen! As per the prerequisites of Iron Lung Records, there is plenty of noise, but HUMAN TROPHY also brings a gothic deathrock experience that I was not prepared for. Guitars that sear and screech descend from every direction while the bass rumbles in perfect time with the drums. A creeping, ambling voice emerges methodically delivering lyrics in a gloomy monotone. The *Primary Instinct* album is full of mid-tempo darkness, but there are also songs like "Devotion" that are pogo-ready with a more D-beat-inspired rhythm. Personally, "The Cabin" is my favorite song on the album, with its haunting pace and spectral guitar work. If you like noise and the sounds of desolation, then I highly recommend HUMAN TROPHY's *Primary Instinct*.

Reviewer: Seth McBurney
Label: Iron Lung

IRKED – Snakes EP

Garage punk band from Northern England. I was drawn to the illegible screaming in the opening track "Snakes," but found myself a bit bored as the songs went on. I did enjoy the variation in their songs, with the feminist lyrics in "Backstreets," to the more pop elements of "Move". The rhythms in the first few opening tracks were intriguing as well. However,

NERVOUS TICK AND THE ZIPPER LIPS – More Monochromatic cassette

Four fiery bonus tracks directly from Buffalo, NY, presented as a companion cassette to their LP release on Feral Kid and Big Neck Records. Aggressive, psychotic-psychedelic garage vibes with a steady guide. Persistent egg/synth punkers with a classical grip on punk tweaks. Fast and effective formula. Favorite track: "Let Me Give You Some Advice," and listen to this if you are into the egg-punk and/or garage-y situation.

Reviewer: Gonza Perez
Label: Tetryon Tapes

NO RELIEF – Destroy Your World 12″

Brighton, UK metallic hardcore band that rips on their second EP, with great, sick breakdowns and steady, fast cadences. Screaming, guttural choruses plus defined main vocals do a great job keeping the tension between sections. Strongly recommended for UKHC lovers. Favorite track: "Throne of Lies."

Reviewer: Gonza Perez
Label: Rest Assured

PANIKATTACK – Ett Sista Farväl LP

By far this month's most unsurprising record, but should you expect anything different from a Swedish hardcore band releasing an LP on the tireless Phobia Records, a label bent on känging up the world? Uppsala's PANIKATTACK belongs in that category of bands that I know I am going to enjoy conservatively before even listening to them. To an extent, I don't even have to listen to them to enjoy them. I just know. *Ett Sista Farväl* is the band's last record, and it does not disappoint. With current and ex-members of ANGER BURNING, MAKABERT FYND, and DISCONTROL among others, the lineup is experienced and the band knows what they have to do and how to do it. Twenty minutes of classically executed, energetic, pummeling käng hardcore with angry vocals and an apt production keeping it raw and heavy. No messing around here as PANIKATTACK never slows down, and delivers what they are expected to. To be enjoyed in the same old school way as bands like DISSEKERAD or VERDICT, with a hint of mid-'90s DISFEAR. If you are not an unconditional käng lover, you may find the album a little long, if not upsettingly redundant, because, as objectively effective as it is given the template, it is pretty much a straight line.

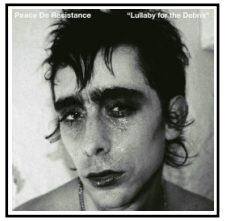
Reviewer: Romain Basset
Label: Phobia

PARATONNERRE – Paratonnerre demo cassette

Garage punk three-piece from France. While I had a bit of trouble distinguishing them from other garage punk bands, something that stood out to me was the droning guitar. I feel that if the guitar had less character and was more like a basic rhythm guitar, then there wouldn't be anything super intriguing about them. However, there were elements I enjoyed like the lyricism (specifically in "So Broke") and how they incorporated French into at least one of their tracks. For me, I quite enjoyed the character of the guitar, but it felt a bit "meh" overall.

Reviewer: Emma Miller
Label: Dirty Slap

PEACE DE RÉSISTANCE – Lullaby for the Debris LP



Moses Brown's second offering as PEACE DE RÉSISTANCE is a beautiful contradiction—it is both familiar and foreign, unsettling and comforting. The sounds are immediately recognizable, calling to mind the sleazier side of '70s New York City glam rock, but no contemporaries come to mind. The music feels nocturnal, while the lyrics are the kinds of thoughts that fill your day, working to get by for yet another month. This is all to illustrate that PEACE DE RÉSISTANCE is not easily pinned down, which is part of what makes this record so special. Brown conveys themes to the listener in such a specific and personal manner, and that skill transforms ideas that certainly are far from new territory into feelings both fresh and urgent; being alienated in your own city ("Ain't What It Used to Be"), trying to get by in a system rigged against most of us ("40 Times the Rent," "Pay Us More"). *Lullaby for the Debris* manages to take the strong foundation laid in Brown's debut *Bits and Pieces*, and takes his project to new heights.

Reviewer: D. Gregory
Label: La Vida Es Un Mus / Peace de

the record if you want to hear the songs. It's absolutely worth the effort of procurement. This is easily one of the top releases of the year and an instant classic.

Reviewer: Matt Casteel
Label: Fuerza Ingobernable

MÖWER – II LP

This album kicks a whole ton of ass, instantly bringing to mind the MOTÖRHEAD of a new generation. That's kind of the point, right? I mean, just look at the name. As is tradition in Lemmy-worship, this album teeters much heavier on the metal side of the punk spectrum, with searing guitar solos that tear through the fabric of each song. I'm a huge fan of the bass tone here as well. Dirty, tinny, and tucked in the pocket, but the moment it comes out for a walk, it completely imposes itself upon the listener. Great stuff here. For fans of playing video poker in your favorite dive bar until you're forced to go home at last call.

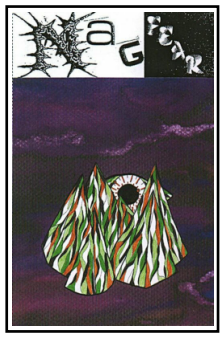
Reviewer: Jake Joyce
Label: Audacious Madness

NAATLO SUTILA – Naatlo Sutila LP

NAATLO SUTILA is a hardcore band from Bordeaux, but rather than playing straightforward hardcore, they decided to mix their old school sound with deathrock and anarcho-punk. The outcome fucking rocks. From the opening drumbeat and bass chug of "Voices" to the thrashing speed of "Hell" and all the way to the end of the CRASS-like feeling of "Revolution," NAATLO SUTILA presents a romp of a self-titled album. As a three-piece, it's amazing the power this trio is able to generate and deliver. If you get a chance, definitely give this one a listen.

Reviewer: Seth McBurney
Label: Acide Folik / Crapoulet / Creepozoïd Productions / Crustatombe / Emergence / Skatepizza / Stonehenge

NAG – Fear cassette



Atlanta punk lifer Brannon Greene and his hardcore punk-tinged deathrock/post-punk outfit NAG—not to be confused with his deathrock/post-punk-tinged hardcore punk outfit PREDATOR—are back with a new cassette. And aside from a few tracks that could be pulled from either project, the seven tracks that make up this release really distinguish NAG as a separate entity. The base sound here is something akin to that first RIKK AGNEW solo record—driving, bleakly melodic guitar, intricate bass interplay, and maybe a light synth (or studio effects that make a guitar sound like a synth) from time to time—but they are really upping the goth this here. A track like "Nike Gate" starts off with JOY DIVISION bass melody before sliding into something like a sludgier version of early SISTERS OF MERCY. It's some of the starkest stuff they've put out. Other tracks remind me a bit of CLAN OF XYMOX, albeit a punker, more organic version of that band. Of course, there are still a handful of rippers—album opener "Pupil" is among my favorite tracks from any of Greene's projects. Just another top-to-bottom great release from a great band!

Reviewer: Alex Howell
Label: Black Hole / Future Shock / Urticaria

NEIN DANKE – Ich Weiß Nicht, Wo Ich Bin 10″

Nine tracks and ten inches from Neuwied, Germany's NEIN DANKE, a duo playing some synth-and-drum-machine-heavy beats with poppy, sugary vocals. Some influences of Neue Deutsche Welle here: MALARIA! comes to mind, as well as KRAFTWERK—both are maybe too-easy comparisons. The songs on *Ich Weiß Nicht, Wo Ich Bin* are at times bright, at others dark; slow and sweeping on "Immer Denken," or fast, driving, and jittery on "Alles, Was Ich Muss." The last track "Illusion" brings all of this together—at 3:40, it has time to wander back and forth from that pumping drum machine to just synth lines hanging out to dry. Would highly recommend.

Reviewer: Willis Schenk
Label: 3xA

I found it difficult to distinguish this band from other garage punk bands, as there was nothing that really jumped out to me.

Reviewer: Emma Miller
Label: Wrong Speed

ISMATIC GURU – IV cassette

Buffalo duo John Toohill (SCIENCE MAN/Swimming Faith Records) and Brandon Schlia (Steak and Cake Records) are back with their fourth cassette release as ISMATIC GURU. It's their first since being cited by *Spin* as one of the many bands making up egg-punk's cresting second wave (BTW, seeing them listed in this context felt like coming across a 1977 *NME* article covering UK punk's second wave listing F.U.2. alongside acts like EATER or GENERATION X—like, yes, technically accurate but still kinda way off). Now, this may just be me, but I feel like they've toned down the egginess since then. I mean, the squiggly guitar and cartoony bounce are still there, but they seem to be shifting focus to the more experimental or proggier elements of their sound. The five tracks that make up the release are darkly melodic, intricately composed, technically proficient, and, considering the average song length is 1:18, absolutely packed to the brim with ideas. Imagine some mix of SPLLIT, MR. BUNGLE (at their least annoying!), and DON CABALLERO. Also, John's vocal performance is fuckin' phenomenal here—dude might be on of the most underrated performers in punk today!

Reviewer: Alex Howell
Label: Swimming Faith

JEAN MIGNON – AN/AL cassette

Eh, it's okay. The production is pretty good and the guitarwork isn't bad, but it's just very plain to me. It just sounds like every egg-punk/garage-y punk release from the last decade. I guess maybe it's just the vocals that rub me the wrong way, because they aren't very pleasant either. Another one I really thought I was going to like. A little too tongue-in-cheek for its own good. Sounds almost like HASIL ADKINS if he fronted GENERATION X.

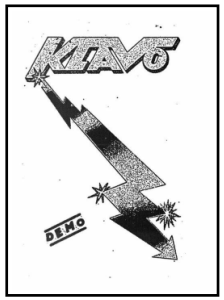
Reviewer: Neal Ray
Label: XTRO

KATARSI – Katarsi LP

It always blows my mind to hear a solo project that sounds more realized than the average fully-outfitted band. Case in point: KATARSI. Born out of desperation and anxiety in Bilbao, Spain, this synth punk project pulls a few threads and weaves them into a vibrant tapestry. Catchy, melodic tunes are subtly infused with a sense of anguish manifesting as a dark undercurrent coursing throughout the album. There is a harkening back to bands of decades past such as the VICIOUS and MIND SPIDERS, but with an eye to the present as well. KATARSI fits neatly into a space between HOME FRONT with a similar tinge of French Oi!, and CUIR who are a bit more direct. All eight tracks here are deftly crafted, hook-laden, and memorable. No small feat for a one-person undertaking. Excellent.

Reviewer: Matt Casteel
Label: Discos Enfermos / Flexidiscos

KLAVO – Klavo demo cassette



Sound and solid working class hammers from Berlin newcomers KLAVO. This is the first release from the four-piece, and it's a good one. The band's musicianship is worth noting, pulling heavily from old pub rockers ROSE TATTOO, as well as COCKSPARRER. "No Good Ones" is a fucking banger of a song.

Reviewer: Johnny Leach
Label: Roachleg

LOST CHIKITOS – Sonido Marabunta LP

I don't know where to start with this one. This record is weird as hell. I guess I would classify LOST CHIKITOS as an experimental metal band: lo-fi, grim black metal howling mixed with Moog squelches, blastbeats, and tremolo picking. But then, sandwiched in between the blasts, sits an odd instrumental track that sounds like someone pressed the "demo" key on a Casio keyboard. It lasts for like two minutes, and then the blasting and screaming start again. But wait, there is another break for a mellow acoustic guitar sing-along. Then more blasting. It seems like a joke, but these folks pressed it to vinyl, which makes for a pretty elaborate joke. I kind of like it just because of how fucking bonkers it is, so check it out if you like noisecore, electronic experimentation, or abruptly ending parties with your musical selections.

Reviewer: Nick Odorizzi
Label: Ugly

LOTHARIO – Hogtied LP

Very raunchy and fun lyricism with lots of sexual themes that matched the vibe of the music. I also enjoyed the distorted vocals and distinct bass lines. However, some of the songs kind of blended together for me and made me a bit bored. I think having most of the songs in the same tempo throughout, and with similar drum tracks at times, made the songs sound quite similar. The album felt a bit long, but the bit of variation of "Doggy" to "Suckhole" back-to-back did help. Overall, the album felt a bit "meh" to me, but if you're into this style of garage punk/rock, I'd give it a try.

Reviewer: Emma Miller
Label: Under the Gun

LUCTA – Eterna Lotta LP

Italian punks LUCTA recently released *Eterna Lotta*, which is a boiling cauldron of hardcore that mutates and evolves in chugs and thrashing. The opening song starts with what sounds like an organ, but then guitars merge with it, soon a bootstomper starts to assemble, and then the tempo doubles into lightspeed. I really get into the song "Il Peso Di leri," or "The Weight of Yesterday," which is a plodding song that ends with discordance and decaying sounds. I'm reminded of EMPTY VESSELS from Connecticut with the type of hardcore LUCTA plays, but obviously LUCTA sings in Italian. The type of playful hardcore that pushes the limits of the genre and explores atmospheric sounds and abstract rhythms all while being punk as fuck. Having been a band for a while now, LUCTA has only issued a few recordings, so *Eterna Lotta* is definitely worth checking out.

Reviewer: Seth McBurney
Label: Static Shock

MARBLED EYE – Read the Air LP

On the distant heels of 2018's *Leisure* LP, Oakland's MARBLED EYE is out with their second LP *Read the Air*. Vocalist and guitarist Chris Natividad also leads the band's stranger, moodier cousin in the solo project PUBLIC INTEREST (I reviewed *Spiritual Pollution* last year, and it took me a minute to remember this connection). With the departure of MARBLED EYE's original bassist (who also had the studio space and did their production) and the pandemic isolating the band, it's no wonder this next album took some time, but it is surely worth the wait. Inside we find ten songs of vocal-droning post-punk pleasure, complete with guitars that wander in and out of each other's riffs without sounding crowded, and disrupter bass and drums that rest and then pummel their way back to the main rhythm. These guys just went on a crazy Midwest and East Coast fall tour, hitting thirteen cities in thirteen days. Wow. *Read the Air*: not to be missed.

Reviewer: Willis Schenk
Label: Digital Regress / Summer Shade

MECHANICAL CANINE – 7 Dollar 7 Song 7 Inch EP

Philly emo outfit with a teaser EP for their LP *To My Chagrin*, which has since been released. The three tracks on the A-side all appear on the new LP, while the B-side has some one-off releases and two live tracks. While emo isn't my taste, I can appreciate the musicianship and recording that are both a little rough, dirty, and loose. I also find James' voice endearing, rather than cloyingly whiny. It looks like they formed back in 2018, and have been putting out quite a bit of music since, three LPs now and a few singles and EPs—their first recording, from what I can tell, is MAN OR ASTRO-MAN?'s "Jimmy Neutron Theme Song" from the Nickelodeon cartoon (they seemingly lifted their band name from a line in the song). I don't know if this context is important, but it may paint a picture of the aesthetic they're going for. If it makes you happy, long live emo?

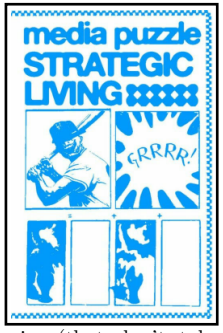
Reviewer: Willis Schenk
Label: Fire Hazard

MECHANICAL CANINE – To My Chagrin LP

Perhaps it's because there are so many ways to interpret the genre, but emo has, beyond all expectations, shown itself to have staying power after decades of misunderstanding and permutations. Maybe it's unfair to just hang the emo cap on a band like Philadelphia's MECHANICAL CANINE, but as a longtime defender, I mean it as a compliment. These songs connect threads of everything from poppy mallpunk to more plaintive touchstones like the WEAKERTHANS, and yet it all comes together in its own mold. One impressive element of note is the runtime of some of these tracks, which regularly clock in around or even under a minute. It shows off the band's ability to pack in hooks and get their point across quickly. Tracks like "Hey Buddy" get in and out but leave you feeling like you traveled somewhere, deftly hopping melodic ideas and genres in a way that feels cohesive. Overall, the band reads as bristling with creativity, which is always refreshing regardless of genre. Then they go full opus for the closer, "Watercourse," which builds impressively to several emotional payoffs before ending with a classic twinkling, clean tone Midwest emo outro. I don't want to paint this crew into a corner with genre signifiers though, and ultimately it's just damn good songwriting on full display. But when the band itself jokes through the song title "Mechanical Canine Saves Emo," it doesn't leave everything to the imagination.

Reviewer: Luke Henley
Label: Don Giovanni

MEDIA PUZZLE – Strategic Living cassette



On their third full-length album, Lismore, Australia's MEDIA PUZZLE delivers nine tracks full of good-timing garage fuzz. The songs are short, with only one going past the two-minute mark, and feature distorted vocals with hooky-as-can-be lyrics, like on the opener "Garage Sale" with a chorus of "Buckle up down the trail / Take myself to the garage sale." Underneath these lyrics (that don't take themselves seriously at all) is a doddering, ghoulish synth, buzzy guitars, and a simple drum machine. The only name I can find associated with this group is Tom Peter, so I'm assuming this is a solo project? Fun, goofy, catchy—great late-summer set of tunes on offer.

Reviewer: Willis Schenk
Label: Knuckles on Stun

MERE MORTALS – Defeat 12″

MERE MORTALS' hardcore is as straightlaced as it is straightforward: rapid-fire, machine gun blastbeats alternating with floor-stomping downstrokes and gang vocals. There's a handful of metal moments, but nothing more than that. I can imagine this record being released in the '90s, when bands like DS-13 and WHAT HAPPENS NEXT? invoked past genres without falling into pastiche. The sound is simple and sweet, like a good quality live recording.

Reviewer: Dov Malzberg
Label: La Gueule Du Ciel

MORDECAI – Seeds From the Furthest Vine LP

The coarse and creative lo-fi of the Montana-born MORDECAI reemerges for a sixth full-length outing. While the loose abstraction of the cover art on *Seeds From the Furthest Vine* broadly fits the band's approach, its stark minimalism is in striking contrast to the music it foretells. Nearly a decade and a half from their inception, the brothers Holt and Elijah Bodish and friend Gavin Swietnicki (in various configurations) are still tending to a fertile garden as they continue to stretch and warp their definition, and these ten tracks present a sprawling landscape of diverse textures. Loaded with artful acoustics, elements of organ, and various types of improvised percussion, they occupy a strange space with their primitive, off-kilter indie sound, sometimes devolving into what comes across more like "sound sculptures" than songs. A rickety roller coaster ensues, from the crude jubilation of the opening "Empty Visions," to the driving dream pop of "When You Know Them As," to the sparse and scribbled "Meat on a Stick," and eventually the shamanic title track, which is decoratively draped across the end of Side A and the start of Side B. "Divine Sea" finds Holt sounding like Lou Reed rambling in his sleep, just before the hopeless nihilism in the folk horror of "Never Get Ahead" kicks in. Ultimately, the two final songs invoke a feeling of the last few minutes before a carnival closes ("Transverse"), and then a feverish accordion serenades some violence behind the closed curtains ("Down in an Alley"). Gorgeous, absurd, and haunting, this stuff really sticks to the psyche.

Reviewer: Jason Harding
Label: Petty Bunco

MURO – Nuevo Dogma LP

MURO is among the most revered hardcore punk bands on the planet. *Nuevo Dogma*, their highly anticipated third album, is a clear demonstration of why this is the case. Picking up where their devastating 2020 full-length *Pacificar* left off, Bogota's finest crank up the heat for these ten scorching tracks. MURO adeptly melds influences from a broad swath of punk subspecies—UK82, Burning Spirits, Italian hardcore—but the sound they've developed is all their own. Impelled by anger and passion, these songs are imbued with a visceral fervor rarely captured in a recording studio. Infectious double-picked riffs, thunderous bass, primal drumming, vocals barked with seething anguish…and it goes well beyond the music. The art that adorns the album cover, booklet, and massive posters (yes, posters plural!) conveys a solicitude, a level of detail and commitment to DIY that has become uncommon in 2024. *Nuevo Dogma* has not been made available for online listening, so you'll have to buy